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Strategic narratives

Schlebusch, Jan

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PROPOSITIONS

Jan Adriaan Schlebusch

Strategic Narratives: Groen van Prinsterer as Nineteenth-Century Statesman-Historian

1. David Carr's phenomenological-narrative approach to historiography is an ideal tool for re-appreciating the socio-political function of Groen's history writing.
2. Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer's success as a Dutch statesman must be explained by the degree of conviction his Christian historical narrative instilled in his primary audience, the nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed people.
3. The socio-political function of Groen's Christian historical narrative does not preclude the sincerity of his theological message about the nature of history (teleologically directed towards Christ's victory over evil) – a message he sincerely believed to be true. In Groen's narrative, certain human acts have inescapable consequences only due to the sovereignty of the Creator who purposefully designed creation to function in this particular way.
4. In spite of its theological nature, a Christian historical narrative such as Groen's can still be a valuable discussion partner in debates about contemporary societal challenges such as the exhaustion of the planet's natural resources.
5. All civic legislation presupposes an underlying moral standard as its basis. The recognition of this fact is necessary for the stable functioning of any political system, including a pluralistic democracy.
6. In contrast to Dutch sentiments, a barbecue (or *braai*, as it is called in South Africa) in the winter cold outside is highly recommended – provided, of course, one is properly dressed and equipped with one's favourite drink. Although very different from a summer barbecue, a barbecue in the winter has the potential to cultivate the intimate atmosphere necessary for delightful intellectual conversation with friends and family.